

May 30, 2016

Dear Mr. Nawrocky,

I am writing in regard to Docket #FD-35952. The proposed Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. railroad running through Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan.

I live in Leroy, Indiana. It is a small town in Lake County in unincorporated Winfield Township. The proposed railroad will come approximately 2 miles from my home at the intersection of Hancock and Montgomery Streets.

My concerns regarding this proposed railroad are many and varied. They are all intertwined and related so it makes it difficult to address each individually.

Most of the land in this end of the county is devoted to farming. Good productive farmland that has been passed down from one generation to the next. Their day begins at sunrise and the work ends at sunset. Even later in harvest season. Everything they do is weather dependent. The farm is their life and their source of income. Having a railroad divide up farm ground is not in the best economic interests of the farmers. It will sever drainage tiles that will result in flooding in the fields which results in loss of crops. Irrigation systems can not be used to their full potential thus resulting in lower crop yields. It will take extra time and distance to travel to get to a crossing to get to the fields on the other side of the tracks. Then there is the obvious loss of land that will be used for the rails, embankments and grade. Yes, they are to be compensated for the ground that will be used for the tracks and easements; but that is little in comparison to the cost of replacing tiles and irrigation systems and the loss of revenue that would have been made at harvest time on that portion of ground. Multiply

that Crop loss income by every year that farm remains fully functioning and you will find that sum to be considerable.

The developers of the proposed railway stated in a local newspaper (The Post Tribune) article that this project will create thousands of construction jobs and potentially remove a million trucks from the roads. A million trucks? That's a loss of a million jobs as each truck represents an employment opportunity for someone. Actually it's probably more than that because not every truck is owned by an independent contractor. Some work for logistics companies who employ not just drivers. They also management, office workers, dispatchers, maintenance, and mechanics. If the trucks aren't running there's no need for the others. The unemployment rate is going to increase. Will local construction companies and local construction workers be used on this project? The jobs created won't be long lasting. Workers want constant steady employment. They want the security a permanent job can provide for them and their families. They boost our local economy by buying homes, cars, shopping at our stores and eating at our restaurants. They pay taxes which goes to support our schools and roads. How much taxes will the railroad be paying at the local level to help with county services? According to the Porter County Assessor (Jon Snyder) and I'm quoting him: "The personal property of railroads, including rail cars, inventory, engines and the like, are captured by the Indiana Department of Revenue into the Commuter Electric Rail Service Fund, and this money does not go to local government to pay for schools, police, fire and other necessary services. A rail road's tax dollars only go to pay for self-serving interests of the railroad itself."

The presence of a noisy railroad will not increase the property value for homeowners who live adjacent to the rail lines. We used to have the Pennsylvania Railroad run by our town. The tracks ran parallel to U.S. Highway 231 and the folks who lived nearby said that after a while you got used to the vibration but not the noise. They said you couldn't hear a thing or talk to each other until the train passed by. One couple I know of who live on the north side of Lowell had planned on selling their home in about 5 years. Now they are contemplating putting their place up for sale within the next year. They feel that if they wait and the railroad does go through they will not get their asking price or possibly not be able to sell their home at all. So if the property values do decrease and what Assessor Jon Snyder says is true; then the rest of us taxpayers (homeowners and small businesses) will have to make up the difference and be burdened with a tax increase.

Locating a railroad in close proximity to schools in Lowell and a subdivision in Helron will be a major safety concern for teachers and parents. Children are curious about anything new and different in their environment. They want to explore and touch and feel these new things. Every parent encourages this natural curiosity using it as a learning experience. Seeing a big locomotive and freight cars is quite a phenomenon for a child of any age. Impressing upon them how dangerous a train can be is a difficult but necessary task for any parent. Unfortunately, a child's level of understanding and comprehension about

danger is not the same as ours. They have a sense of daring and invincibility. I shudder to think of any kind of accident involving a child and a train.

Quite a few accidents happen on I-65 between the Crown Point U.S. Highway 231 interchange and the Lowell Route 2 interchange. If the accident occurs in the north bound lanes, the cars exit at Lowell and head east on Route 2 to get to Clay Street so they can head north to U.S. 231 to get back to I-65. What a bottle neck that will be on Route 2 if cars are waiting for a train crossing Route 2 near Clay Street. The backup will be for miles.

The amount of trains coming through the area (possibly up to 110 a day) and the frequency (about 1 every 13 minutes) will definitely cut down on the response time for emergency vehicles. Sitting at a crossing waiting for a train to pass or seeking an alternate route, sometimes going many miles out of the way, would have to be so frustrating for police, fire, & EMT's who know quick response time is so critical. A few precious minutes can be the difference between life and death for someone who is in distress.

Another concern is the railroad crossings. Many years ago a co-worker of mine and her husband were coming home on a dark stormy night. It was raining very hard and visibility was not very good. They weren't driving very fast when something hit their car and drug it off the road. Their car became disentangled and ended up at the base of an embankment. Upon exiting they discovered the railroad tracks and realized they had hit a train. Their car sustained a lot of front end damage. Luckily, they were alive and unhurt - just badly shook up. It happened at an unlit unguarded crossing. Our rural roads have few if any lights. On these occasions of low visibility, such as stormy

rainy nights), dense fog, and winter whiteouts), unlit unguarded crossings can be a very dangerous situation.

Another area of concern is what kind of cargo will be transported on this proposed rail line. Is it something non-threatening or is it something hazardous & dangerous to humans, animals, and our environment? On April 27, 2016, I heard a radio interview on WGN (a major market Chicago radio station) of Ted Fishman. He wrote an article for "Chicago Magazine." His article is very disturbing and frightening. Let me summarize what he wrote: There are tank cars that hold 30,000 gallons per tank of crude oil. Each train can have up to 100 tank cars. Most of it is light sweet Bakken Crude. It is explosive. This comes mainly from North Dakota. It is estimated that 40 of these trains pass through Chicago weekly on their way East to be refined. Over the last 3 years there have been 17 derailments of these trains. Eight resulted in explosions. Flames are so hot fire departments can't extinguish them and have to let them burn out. Some burn 1-4 days. Five of these derailments resulted in spills that resulted in the pollution of major waterways. The tank cars are owned by the oil producers and refiners not the railroads. Federal regulation passed in 2015 mandates that by 2025 all tank cars must be replaced with newer models with thicker steel shells and other safety measures. The Department of Transportation accident data shows broken rails were the main cause of derailments. The Federal Rail Administration which oversees the integrity of tracks can only monitor less than 1% of the federally regulated rail system due to a shortage of manpower. Mr. Fishman did not mention Great Lakes Basin Transportation in his written article, but he did in the radio interview. He felt that

the proposed GLBT rail line would be the possible solution Chicago and the surrounding suburbs are looking for to divert these particular trains from their areas.

On May 3, 2016 in another interview on WGN radio, the national media spokesman (I'm sorry but I didn't get his last name) spoke for the National Resources Defense Council about these tank trains also. He said the mayors of Aurora and DuPage County Communities have been very vocal for a long time about getting these trains diverted from their areas. They have said that new rail lines around their towns and communities is what is needed. He also said Chicago wants to keep the revenue producing freight train lines and not these other ones.

My first initial reaction when hearing and reading about the proposed rail line was why would they only want to divert 15 or 20 percent of the rail traffic away from Chicago if it is so congested. Then I heard the radio interviews and read Mr. Fishman's article. I feel the majority of the freight trains running on this proposed railway will be carrying these crude oil filled tank cars. A defect in a rail, wheel, or axle could cause a disastrous derailment. Evacuation is mandatory in a half mile radius where the most severe damage and air pollution occurs if there is an explosion. In rural areas there are no plans in place for what to do if a disaster happens. Our fire departments are comprised by mostly volunteers and wouldn't have the equipment or ability to fight this kind of fire. But I don't think any fire department of any size would be capable of dealing with such a catastrophe. What if a derailment happens and there is no explosion but a spill occurs and it is by the well-water treatment plants in Lowell and Nelson. The end result is contaminated drinking water. What if a spill occurs at the

Singleton Stone Quarry which is going to pump 30-72 million gallons of water into the Singleton Ditch a day. The Singleton Ditch empties into the Kankakee River. Again contaminated water that could threaten aquatic and wildlife habitats in that area. Not mention that Kankakee, Illinois gets its drinking water from that river. How long will it take to clean up the contaminated oil and water to make it fit for use again? Will there be any health concerns for humans and animals in relation to the chemicals used to clean the water? Will people leave the area seeking somewhere else that offers a better quality of water for consumption and use? All of these questions and concerns are a big impact on our lives and environment and need to be considered.

In summation, the negative aspects of this proposed railroad line far outweigh the positives. I don't see any long term benefits for the business community or inhabitants of Lake and Porter counties in regards to this proposed rail line.

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